

Citizens Advice

Introduction to the service

2009



6 million
advice issues dealt with

1.9 million
individual clients advised

8.8 million
visits to our public information
and advice website –
www.adviceguide.org.uk

416
Citizens Advice Bureaux
in England and Wales

Over 3,300
locations where the service provides
free and independent advice

“ The Government have strongly supported their [CAB’s] work, which is even more important to help people who find themselves in difficulties because of the downturn. ”

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, 26 March 2009

Who we are and what we do

Our aims and principles

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination. Its aims are to provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

What we do

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their problems. As the UK's largest advice provider we are equipped to deal with any issue, from anyone, spanning debt and employment to housing and immigration plus everything in between. In fact nearly half the population has used our service at some point in their life. In the last year alone, the Citizens Advice service helped 1.9 million people to solve 6 million problems. But we're not just here for times of crisis – we also use clients' stories anonymously to campaign for policy changes that benefit millions, often without them even realising.

How we're structured behind the scenes

There are 416 Citizens Advice Bureaux across England and Wales, all of which are independent registered charities. Citizens Advice itself is also an independent registered charity, as well as being the membership organisation for bureaux. Together we make up the Citizens Advice service. Through the training, information systems and support it provides, Citizens Advice equips bureaux to deliver the highest quality advice to their local residents. In turn, client evidence submitted by bureaux alerts Citizens Advice to widespread problems that require action at a national level.

How the public knows us

The Citizens Advice service offers information and advice through face-to-face, telephone and email services, and online via Adviceguide.org.uk. Between them, the 416 bureaux make face-to-face advice available from over 3,300 locations including high streets, community centres, doctors' surgeries, courts and prisons. Of the 27,000 people who work across the Citizens Advice service, 21,000 of them are volunteers and 6,000 are paid staff. What they all share in common is being highly trained and passionate about getting justice for their clients.

42% of people say they have used a Citizens Advice Bureau at some point in their lives

BMRB, 2008

86% of those who have used a Citizens Advice Bureau are satisfied with the service they received

BMRB, 2008

77% of people believe that the Citizens Advice service offers free advice that is truly independent and impartial

nfpSynergy Brand Attributes survey, 2009

46% of people felt less anxious, stressed or had fewer health problems after using a CAB

MORI, 2005

“Advisers recognise that one problem is often the cause or result of another so, rather than addressing a single issue at a time, they look at a client’s situation holistically.”

To find your local CAB online:
See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/getadvice

To get advice online:
See www.adviceguide.org.uk

Advice services

The Citizens Advice service plays a central role in tackling injustice, reducing poverty and social exclusion, and enabling people to realise their full potential.

The delivery of advice

Advisers recognise that one problem is often the cause or result of another so, rather than addressing a single issue at a time, they look at a client's situation holistically. This way, other potential problems can be identified early or pre-empted, which prevents them escalating into anything more serious. Bureaux are right at the heart of their communities and the services they offer reflect the profile of residents.

This could mean access to multi-lingual advisers, or information on specific local issues.

The impact of advice

Clients often report improved health and increased confidence after receiving advice, both of which reduce the demand for health services and contribute to happier, more integrated communities. In fact, the service saves time and money for society and stakeholders in many ways, for example, by preventing homelessness, avoiding legal action and helping people to fill in official forms. As well as taking the strain off other services, bureaux also actively contribute to the local economy through means such as increased benefit take-up and the training of volunteers who go on into paid jobs.

Analysis of client problems 2008/09 ('000s)

	CAB client problems (England and Wales)	Adviceguide visitor problems (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
Benefits and tax credits	1,711	2,440
Consumer goods and services	123	1,260
Debt	1,927	810
Education	23	160
Employment	555	2,320
Financial products and services	118	80
Health and community care	69	350
Housing	409	1,030
Immigration, asylum and nationality	81	120
Legal	264	590
Relationships and family	289	1,080
Signposting and referral	174	n/a
Tax	49	1,140
Travel, transport and holidays	42	350
Utilities and communications	98	290
Other	74	350
Total advice issues	6,005	12,150

Figures rounded to the nearest thousand. Adviceguide figures are for web page views and not equal to the overall number of visits

21,000 volunteers
in the service, including volunteer trustees

17% of new volunteers
are under the age of 25

19% of new volunteers
are from black, Asian or minority ethnic communities

Volunteers receive full training and support
to become an adviser. It can take around
250 hours of learning and on-the-job practice
to be fully competent

To volunteer for your local CAB:

- ***See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/joinus***
- ***Call our volunteer hotline on 08451 264 264***
- ***Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.***

“ Volunteering not only made me feel I was helping others, but it was also the most significant factor in my job interview success. ”

Peter Firthaged 23, Stoke CAB

Volunteering

Of the 27,000 people who work in the service, 21,000 of them are volunteers, all from different backgrounds with different skills. They perform a variety of roles from giving advice to fundraising, IT, administration, publicity, campaigning and trusteeship.

Benefits for all

Volunteering for a CAB provides a tremendous benefit to the local community. Our volunteers give over £85 million worth of hours a year between them. Without their passion and generosity the service would struggle to survive and the cost to the economy of unresolved problems would soar. CAB volunteers benefit

from free training, ongoing support and expenses. Training results in an accredited qualification which, along with the experience of volunteering itself, helps people develop skills for life beyond the bureau. Of the volunteer advisers that left the service in 2008/09, 27 per cent left for paid employment and eight per cent went into further education.

For younger people, volunteering provides new experiences, a confidence boost and a path into work or education. Our older, or retired, volunteers say it keeps them active, in touch with the community, and means they can 'put something back'. What is common across all volunteers is that they find it a uniquely rewarding experience.



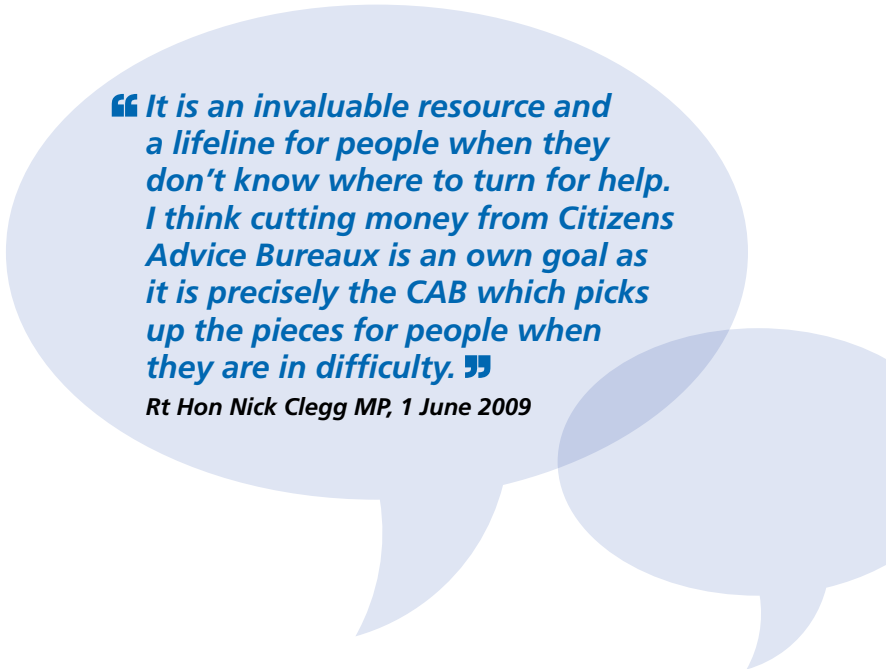
CAB volunteer

84% of stakeholders describe themselves as advocates of Citizens Advice

Opinion Leader, 2007

During 2008/09, our campaigns touched many lives:

- Our participation in the campaign on child poverty included public involvement through website surveys, postcard returns and filmed interviews with bureaux clients.
- We worked with bureaux to ensure they had the opportunity and means to input into the consultation process of the Post Office network change. Over 50 per cent of bureaux were involved in the campaign. Bureaux engaged in initial consultations may have helped shape Post Office Ltd's decisions about which local branches to close, resulting in better decisions for the community.
- Sixty per cent of bureaux engaged in our bailiffs campaign. The campaign sought to: raise awareness of the problems experienced by bureaux clients when bailiffs are used to collect unpaid council tax; improve local authority practice in this area; and lobby MPs on the need for a regulatory framework to be included in the Draft Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Bill.
- After a long running campaign by Citizens Advice, the Government agreed to proposals for better enforcement of unpaid Employment Tribunal awards.
- We also campaigned on backdating benefits, letting agent's charges, school uniform costs, dental helplines and funeral payments.



“ It is an invaluable resource and a lifeline for people when they don't know where to turn for help. I think cutting money from Citizens Advice Bureaux is an own goal as it is precisely the CAB which picks up the pieces for people when they are in difficulty. ”

Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, 1 June 2009

Campaigning

The Citizens Advice service doesn't just exist to provide advice in times of crisis – we also campaign for changes to policy and practice that benefit millions of people each year by preventing problems arising in the first place.

Evidence-based lobbying

Every client that comes into a bureau with a problem is a first hand example of policies and practices having gone wrong. It is the case notes recorded during interviews with clients that form the foundation of our award-winning evidence based policy work.

We use these case notes, anonymously, to demonstrate to policy makers and service providers the impact of their decisions, and to lobby for improvement. Our case notes are detailed and our geographic coverage is incomparable, giving us a vast body of evidence on the problems that people are facing. Our bespoke software allows for it to be analysed at a local or a national level, and enables us to track trends year on year.

This unique and important insight empowers us to: expose inadequate or unfair laws, policies and practices; respond with authority to Government consultations; and recommend how resources can be targeted most effectively.

**To get involved in our campaigns:
See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/campaigns**

“ Citizens Advice Bureaux are performing an invaluable service for the millions of people who are suffering grave financial difficulties in the recession, and we should do everything we can to support them. ”

Rt Hon Alan Duncan MP, 26 March 2009

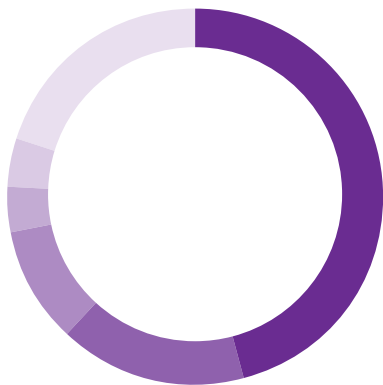


CAB volunteer

How the service is funded

Each Citizens Advice Bureau is a charity reliant on funding from a variety of sources. Citizens Advice is also a registered charity.

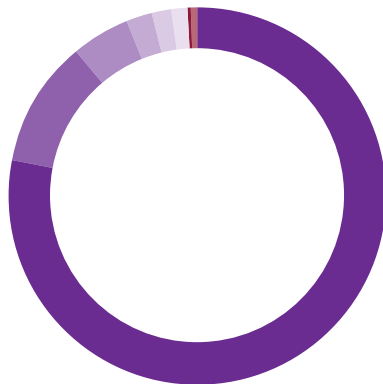
Citizens Advice Bureaux income 2008/09



Local Government	£70,000,000	46%
Legal Services Commission	£25,000,000	16%
Financial Inclusion Fund (via Citizens Advice)	£15,000,000	10%
Big Lottery Fund	£6,000,000	4%
Primary Care Trusts	£6,000,000	4%
Other sources	£31,000,000	20%
Total	£153,000,000	100%

For a breakdown of the financial situation for each Citizens Advice Bureau, please consult individual bureau annual reports.

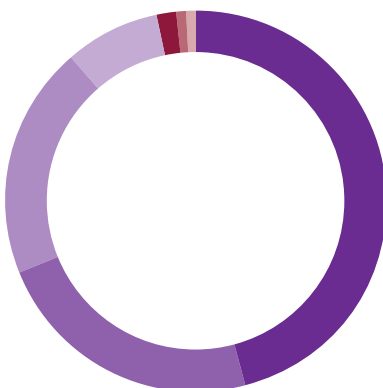
Citizens Advice income 2008/09



Government grants	£43,645,000	78.1%
Other grants	£6,147,000	11.0%
Delivery of services	£2,677,000	4.8%
Other public body grants	£1,388,000	2.4%
Training and support	£909,000	1.6%
Bank interest	£714,000	1.3%
Donations	£223,000	0.4%
Other income	£211,000	0.4%
Total	£55,859,000	100%

For a full list of Citizens Advice donors, see our annual report and accounts 2008/09 at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Citizens Advice expenditure 2008/09



Projects in partnership	£24,203,000	46.1%
Strengthening the bureaux network	£12,060,000	23.0%
Providing quality information and advice	£10,319,000	19.6%
Influencing policy	£4,221,000	8.0%
Delivery of services	£1,019,000	1.9%
Governance costs	£342,000	0.7%
Costs of generating funds	£352,000	0.7%
Total	£52,516,000	100%

96% of people have heard of the Citizens Advice service

BMRB, 2008

52% of people have either used a bureau themselves, or have friends and family who have

MORI, 2005

We want to ensure that everyone can access the help they need, when they need it. We have initiated many significant projects to help society's most vulnerable. However, there are many more things we would like to do or that we are already working towards. All of these need additional funding. They include:

- using technology to increase access to our services
- launching a national telephone line in England and Wales
- developing our capacity for partnership working
- setting up referral practices, so more clients get access to those with the most expertise
- establishing a truly national financial capability programme to reduce the instances of people getting into debt
- helping bureaux to identify and access more sustainable income streams
- improving systems to better capture evidence from clients.

We are extremely thankful for the support we receive from companies, trusts, individuals and others, and we always welcome new partners who can help us build on our work.

To support our work:

- ***Contact kate.trenouth@citizensadvice.org.uk***
- ***See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/support-us***
- ***Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.***



CAB volunteer

Our principles

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- to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

Have you found this publication useful or interesting? Please share your thoughts at corporate.communications@citizensadvice.org.uk

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www.citizensadvice.org.uk
www.adviceguide.org.uk

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